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SUBJECT: NANGARHAR GOVERNOR SHERZAI STUMPS FOR LOYA JIRGA

Classified By: Interagency Provincial Affairs Deputy Coordinator Hoyt Y
ee for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

1. (C) At an August 30 iftar, Nangarhar Governor Gul Agha Sherzai said he had drafted a comprehensive post-election peace plan comprising three key points: the convening of a Loya Jirga to address national security, the establishment of a small council of presidential advisors on finance and security, and the placement of qualified experts in positions appropriate to their skill-sets throughout government. Local to Nangarhar, Sherzai stumped for a 350-man police auxiliary, but said he thought tribes in contested areas would be interested in joining more formal community defense initiatives that would place local hires in the Afghan Border Police (ABP) and under the Ministry of the Interior (MoI). Sherzai appears to covet a more prominent national role post-election, and Task Force Mountain Warrior will look to leverage his authority, where helpful, in his remaining time as governor to exploit rifts between certain tribes and the Taliban, most notably in the Achin region. End Summary.

2. (C) On August 30, Commander of the International Security Assistance Force (COMISAF) Advisor Colonel Owens, Task Force Mountain Warrior Commander Colonel George and State Department Regional Representative joined the governor at his residence for an iftar. Mohammed Hashem, Advisor of Nangarhar Province, joined the discussion. Sherzai raised many of the points that he has made in previous, separate meetings over the past month with General Scaparotti, Brigadier General Nicholson, and Colonel George.

Nangarhar Police Auxiliary Discussed

3. (C) The governor raised again his plan for a 350 person police auxiliary to secure Nangarhar province, comprising hand selected personnel from tribes in every district. In the alternative, Sherzai was receptive to Colonel George's suggestion to empower local solutions by working with tribes to hire locally for more formal positions with the ABP. The governor said he would like to see such a plan implemented across all Pashto border provinces. Sherzai added that a peace jirga should be held in Nangarhar to advance a peace process. Youth and elders would be targeted, and Taliban would be encouraged to attend to discuss reintegration. Sherzai sees no post-election national impediments to empowering local solutions within Afghanistan.
Sherzai Peace Plan

4. (C) Sherzai said he has developed a draft comprehensive peace plan that he would send up to the next president immediately after election results are finalized. The plan's centerpiece is a post-election (minimum 600 person) Loya Jirga designed to address such matters as relations with neighboring states and the Taliban's challenge. It would be

&wonderful8 if the Taliban decide to participate in the Loya Jirga, Sherzai said, adding that if the Taliban reject a Loya Jirga, they will &cut their own throats.8 &Everything flows from the Loya Jirga, and once it decides on a course of action, we,ll win the war,8 Sherzai emphasized, noting that every province would have its own peace jirga as well. Note: President Karzai has publicly campaigned for a post-election Loya Jirga. End Note.
Sherzai,s Anti-Corruption Platform

15. (C) In response to Colonel Owens, query, Sherzai said he agreed that bad governance is as great a threat to stability as the Taliban. The governor said the country is at a &delicate8 time, and that Karzai made &huge mistakes8 in his first term, appointing unqualified people to numerous posts. Sherzai said he wanted to run against Karzai in the elections to challenge Karzai on corruption grounds, but had dropped his bid after Karzai approached him with a copy of the Koran and asked him not to run.
&Full Power8 Needed to Pacify Kandahar

16. (C) On Kandahar, Sherzai reiterated his oft repeated theme that Kandahar needs a permanent (vice acting) governor, and that any such governor must &engage with the people8 and walk the streets like he did when he returned for a recent visit. Sherzai added that Mahmoud Karzai, the president,s brother, urged Sherzai to return as Kandahar governor, but Sherzai insisted he would only do so if vested with &full power.8 Sherzai also said he continues to press Karzai to eliminate public criticism of Coalition Forces over civilian casualties and to remember the United States, role in Karzai,s own rise.

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Comment

17. (C) The Governor remains focused on national issues and appears to be looking to exercise his influence after the election. Sherzai continues to press for better ties between the government and tribes and other influences through the mobilization of jirgas and the Loya Jirga, appearing confident that he can effectively shape these mechanisms to his advantage. Sherzai covets an empowered MoI, with governors subordinate, indicating that he seeks far greater authority within Afghanistan than the considerable local influence he would have as governor either in Nangarhar or Kandahar. Task Force Mountain Warrior will look to leverage his authority, where helpful, in his remaining time as governor in Nangarhar to exploit rifts between certain tribes and the Taliban, most notably in the Achin region. End Comment.

18. (C) This cable has been reviewed by SCR-E and Colonels Owens and George.
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